

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON DIVISION

IN RE: ETHICON, INC.
PELVIC REPAIR SYSTEM
PRODUCTS LIABILITY LITIGATION

MDL 2327

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO:

Lee v. Ethicon, Inc., et al.

Civil Action No. 2:12-cv-05621

ORDER

Pending is a Motion to Dismiss for Failure to Timely Effect Service of Process, filed by defendants Ethicon, Inc. and Johnson & Johnson¹ on October 5, 2017 (“Motion”). [ECF No. 21]. For the reasons stated below, the Motion is **GRANTED**.

I. Background

This case resides in one of seven MDLs assigned to me by the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation concerning the use of transvaginal surgical mesh to treat pelvic organ prolapse and stress urinary incontinence. In the seven MDLs, there are approximately 28,000 cases currently pending, over 17,000 of which are in the Ethicon, Inc. MDL, MDL 2327. Managing the MDLs requires the court to streamline certain litigation procedures in order to improve efficiency for the parties and the court. Some of these management techniques simplify the parties’ responsibilities. For instance, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure require a plaintiff to serve the

¹ As used herein, Ethicon, Inc. and Johnson & Johnson includes any of these entities former or present parent companies, subsidiaries, affiliated companies, directors, officers, design surgeons, employees, distributors, or detail representatives named in an action pending in MDL No. 2327.

defendant a summons and a copy of the complaint. Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(c)(1). However, in this MDL, the defendants agreed to waive formal service of process as long as the plaintiff sends by email or certified mail “the short form complaint and, if in their possession, a sticker page or other medical record identifying the product(s) at issue in the case.” *See* Pretrial Order #20, *In re: Ethicon, Inc. Pelvic Repair System Products Liability Litigation*, No. 2:12-md-2327, http://www.wvsd.uscourts.gov/MDL/ethicon/pdfs/PTO_20.pdf (stating that this order applies to “each member related case previously transferred to, removed to, or filed in this district,” in addition to cases subsequently filed). Thus, the court excused the plaintiff from formally serving process on the defendants here, if she completed this simple procedure. Nevertheless, the plaintiff in this case failed to effectuate service by either method within the time allotted under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(m).²

II. Analysis

The defendants move to dismiss this case for insufficient service of process under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(5). Rule 4(m), which governs the sufficiency of service of process, provides:

If a defendant is not served within 120 days after the complaint is filed, the court—on motion or on its own after notice to the plaintiff—must dismiss the action without prejudice against that defendant or order that service be made within a specified time. But if the plaintiff shows good cause for the failure, the court must extend the time for service for an appropriate period.

² Any reference to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure Rule 4(m) is to the 1993 version in effect at the time the plaintiffs filed the complaint with this court.

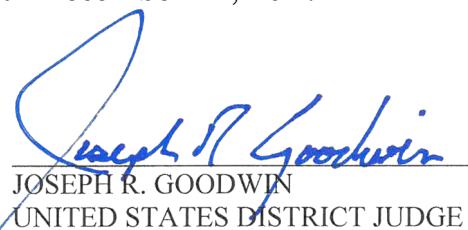
Here, the plaintiff filed her complaint in the Western District of Kentucky on July 13, 2012 (Complaint [ECF No. 1]). The Judicial Panel on Multi-District Litigation transferred this case to the Ethicon MDL on September 20, 2012. Therefore, the plaintiff was required to either serve the defendants under Rule 4 or comply with Pretrial Order # 20 by approximately November 12, 2012, but never effectuated service by either method. (Defs.' Mot. to Dismiss [ECF No. 21]).

In the instant Motion, the defendants are seeking their dismissal from this case pursuant to Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 12(b)(5) and 4(m). On October 19, 2017, the plaintiff filed a response through counsel [ECF No. 22]. In the response, counsel for plaintiff represent that all efforts to reach the plaintiff since the filing of her complaint have been unsuccessful. As such, counsel for plaintiff request the court dismiss this case without prejudice.

The court **ORDERS** that the Motion to Dismiss for Failure to Timely Effect Service of Process, filed by defendants Ethicon, Inc. and Johnson & Johnson, is **GRANTED**. Because there remains other defendants in this case that did not join the motion to dismiss, the court **ORDERS** that only Ethicon, Inc., Ethicon Women's Health and Urology, Gynecare, and Johnson & Johnson be **DISMISSED** from this case without prejudice.

The court **DIRECTS** the Clerk to send a copy of this Order to counsel of record and any unrepresented party.

ENTER: December 12, 2017


JOSEPH R. GOODWIN
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE